Conference on Disarmament

21 May 2014
English
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Note verbale dated 19 May 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation addressed to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament transmitting the comments by the Deputy Defence Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Anatoly I. Antonov, on the remarks made by representatives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States of America on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the border with Ukraine

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to enclose comments made by the Russian Deputy Defence Minister, Mr. Anatoly Antonov, dated 8 May 2014, with a request to distribute it as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

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Comments by the Deputy Defence Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Anatoly I. Antonov, on claims by representatives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States of America that there are no indications of the withdrawal of Russian troops from the border with Ukraine

"In the last day, official representatives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States of America have reported that they have no indication that the positions of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine have changed. As usual, our colleagues from NATO, and especially those from the United States, did not bother to provide any evidence to support their position.

In this connection I should like to emphasize that up until now not a single State of the North Atlantic Alliance, including the United States, has presented us with a formal claim that the Russian Federation has failed to comply with or has directly violated its international obligations in the field of conventional weapons. That notwithstanding, our western partners have assiduously tried to convince us to demonstrate 'unilateral transparency' and to grant access for additional inspection missions in the territory of the Russian Federation.

This was specifically the topic of discussion during a recent telephone conversation between the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation and the United States Secretary of Defense. During the conversation, General Sergei Shoigu of the Russian army informed his counterpart that following exercises by Russian units at the end of April in districts along the Ukrainian border, the units had been withdrawn to their permanent bases.

In this connection, we should like to note the following. In the past two months, in accordance with the Treaty on Open Skies and the Vienna document of 2011, we have facilitated about a dozen inspection measures, including a special observation flight by Ukraine in the border region of the Russian Federation.

In addition, on 6 May the joint group for the Treaty on Open Skies consisting of Norway and the United States carried out its regular observation flight along the border with Kharkiv and Luhansk Provinces of Ukraine. On 7 May it carried out a flight south of Bryansk, along an area near towns in the vicinity of Hlukhiv, in Sumska Province. There was no interference from our side in the selection of the flight path. No undeclared military activity was found to be taking place in these areas.

Official reports drawn up in the presence of representatives of the Russian Federation contain one set of conclusions, but what is then released to the public is contradictory information, consisting of propaganda clichés accusing the Russian Federation of failing to meet its obligations.

To avoid further provocation, we have withdrawn even tactical units that had been conducting drills at training ranges near the border. The Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation specifically informed his counterpart from the United States of this during the telephone conversation.

Against this background, the Ukrainian military is continuing to build up its presence along the Russian-Ukrainian border. A force of some 15,000 Ukrainian troops has been deployed in the border region, and the call for new enlistment has been renewed.

At the same time, NATO has increased its troop contingent in Eastern Europe.

In the context of the continuing crisis in Ukraine, such actions do nothing to help tone down tensions in that country.

For our part, we call upon the 'official representatives' of NATO and the Pentagon to refrain from cynically misleading international public opinion regarding the actual situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border.

It is foolhardy to stubbornly hammer home cold war stereotypes of the last century on the Western public in an age when the Internet and a free press are universally available. Such an approach can only undermine the reputation of those who spread Western propaganda themselves."

Moscow, 8 May 2014